

Ben Judd Jr.
Wrangell, Alaska
December 30, 1942

Dr. Everett B. King
Board of National Missions
156 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Dear Dr. King:

I rather guess that you are wondering why you haven't heard from us. The war has so changed the mail system to Wrangell that our service is very slow. I am taking the first opportunity to mail this letter to you.

Alaska is even more beautiful than we had expected. To us, Wrangell is one of the most interesting and delightful spots that we have ever seen. It has made us the happiest two people in Alaska. We like it very much!

The Presbyterian Church here in Wrangell has a great opportunity. The people in the Church are very interested and capable of assuming leadership. They are willing to work far more than a similar congregation in the States, but their chief hinderance is there lack of numbers.

At the first elders meeting we talked over the problems of the Church and what could be done. I will list the problems and explain them briefly.

1. The Sunday School

(It can be said that there is no Sunday School. We have every Church member's child in the S.S. and with this there are only about 12 counting the teachers. The members just don't have any children)

2. Young People

(There are no young people in the Church. There is one girl fourteen and then the next person is in their late twenties. There are only about forty young people in the four grades of High School.)

3. Sunday Evening Service

(The elders said it was impossible to have any Sunday Evening Service. The previous minister tried it and for one or two evenings there would be a dozen and then no one would come. People will come to service in the morning but not in the evening.)

4. Prayer Meeting

(The same is true here as on the Sunday Evening Service.)

5. Church Membership

(It was suggested by the elders that the Church roll be gone over as this had not been done in a number of years. This was done with the result that 32 names were dropped. These people were not known by any of the elders, had not been here for a number of years, had not been to Church in the last five years, were confirmed drunks (one elder) or had moved or died. There are fifty-two members of the Church. If this had been done each year it would not be necessary to report this drop in membership.)

6. Church Giving

(The people here have not been educated to the responsibilities of self-support. Many members who are wealthy give very little to the Church.)

It can also be said that the situation here has many good points. I will list them as the bad points.

1. The Choir

(There is a choir of about ten voices who are faithful and have unusual ability. The choir is a growing organization)

2. Ladies Aid

(They are a large active, energetic group of women who meet regularly and have excellent leadership)

3. Unlimited Opportunity

(The largest majority of people in Wrangell do not go to Church and have no interest in religion.)

There are five churches in this village with full time ministers. The Salvation Army has three full time workers. (Wrangell is the divisional headquarters) The Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church are the two strongest churches. The Assembly of God has the largest Sunday School in town. This is due to their custom of cash awards made for each Bible verse memorized and treats to all who attend. The Seventh Day Advents also follow this practice, but are not as successful. The Episcopal Church is small and having it's own problems.

The work of the Churches in the Indian Institute is limited to one half hour each week. This time is used for instruction and services. It has been the custom for the Salvation Army and the Presbyterian Church to hold Sunday morning services at the Institute on alternate Sundays. This has not been done yet because of the adverse weather conditions and the lack of interest and transportation. We are trying to get the Institute to run a bus each Sunday morning so as to bring the students to the various local Churches. This phase of the work I will keep you posted on as fast as it develops.

Our work among the natives in town is very small. It consists of a Missionary Society composed of elderly women

that do not study missions but meet to talk and eat. There are only four younger women in the group. I would say that this group will be gone in ten years and little will be left of the society if new blood is not found. Much of the trouble in this group results from the domination of Mrs. Tamaree over the group. (A former Board Worker, now 80, who tries to run the group, but they fight her and refuse to elect her to even minor positions) New blood must be found for this group.

We are trying to face these problems one at a time and find a solution to them. We realize that it will take time and that it will be a slow painful matter. The most heartening thing is the loyal support of the members in attendance and interest. I know these problems can be solved in time.

The first steps which have been taken is the meeting of the Sunday School teachers to study methods in which we can build back the S.S. to the level that Mr. Pederson had when he was here. This man did a good work in the Sunday School. We are having a Church dinner one Sunday night a month. The Choir is undertaking a program of religious music every other month and I am undertaking a special program on the alternate Sunday. We are going to unite with the Episcopal Church on every fifth Sunday if the Bishop is willing. We are trying to find some means of starting a young peoples work, but yet haven't settled on any plan.

During the period which we are now in we are trying to make the Sunday morning service as beautiful and meaningful as possible. The coming Sunday the Church Bulletin will make it's first appearance. In view of the membership I feel that the attendance at this service has been good.

In regards to the salary it was voted to continue as had been done with Mr. Champlin. The Board to pay ~~\$105.00~~ each month and the Church to pay the balance up to \$1,700.00. This of course includes pension. There was no discussion of this matter and they only said they were sorry that they couldn't pay more. This is very satisfactory to us as we had rather expected that the Church wouldn't be able to pay it's part for sometime. OK.

I am not discouraged, disappointed or surprised. There is a work to be done here and I only hope that I can do it. The government has classified Wrangell as a remote locality. It is a fishing town with a big population in the summer and small in the winter. The war and the draft has done to Wrangell what it has to every small town. We have our problems but they can be met and they will be met. The opportunity for service here has not been met, but we hope and pray that in the years to come we will start to meet it. After I have been here longer I can tell you more of what the future holds for the Church. There is ample room for growth today!

Yours truly,

January 11, 1943

AIR MAIL

Rev. Mr. Ben Judd, Jr.
Wrangell, Alaska

Dear Ben:

I have your letter of December 30, and have read it through very carefully. I think you have sized up the situation very well. Wrangell is a very attractive place, and it does have opportunities for service. However, there are some knotty problems that you must solve before any large amount of service can be rendered.

Whatever you do you will find it to be rather slow motion. The people there simply do not take to anything very rapidly. I am more than glad that your salary is to be on the basis of \$1700.00. The Board, of course will continue to pay the \$105.00 a month. It is encouraging to know that the church is going to join in paying their share.

Cordially yours,

EBK/mk